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DEPARTMENT FOR S/CT RHONDA SHORE, ED SALAZAR AND EUR/AGS

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SUBJECT: Austria: 2005 Country Report on Terrorism

REF: STATE 193439

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General Assessment

¶1. Austria has been a constructive ally in the fight against terrorism. Austria has shown leadership in regional anti-terrorism initiatives and in ongoing efforts to tighten controls on suspected terrorism financing.

¶2. Austria is forthcoming and diligent in implementing asset freeze decisions pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions and EU "Clearinghouse" designations. Austria's legal and institutional framework includes comprehensive money laundering and terrorist financing legislation that complies with FATF 40+9 Recommendations. Through November 2005, the Austrian Financial Intelligence Unit and the Federal Agency for State Protection and Counterterrorism (BVT) received 24 reports on suspected terrorism financing transactions. This was a significant increase over 2004, and was largely due to improved banking control mechanisms and better international cooperation.

¶3. New legislation, which takes effect on January 1, 2006, introduces criminal liability for all legal entities, including partnerships and economic interest groupings. The law covers all crimes listed in the criminal code, including corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing.

Sanctuary Assessment

¶4. Austria is not a known sanctuary for terrorist groups. The BVT closely monitors visits to or transits through Austria of individuals they suspect of having connections to terrorist organizations. Austrian authorities generally maintain that radicalized Muslims do not pose an immediate security threat in Austria. Austria's official Muslim community has convincingly condemned past terrorist attacks, including the London subway bombings of July 2005.

¶5. In the wake of the July 2005 London bombings, the Interior Ministry's intelligence arm, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and for Terrorism (BVT), again stepped up surveillance of suspected Islamic extremists. In 2005, Austria began implementing its 2004 legislation permitting police video surveillance of public spaces.

¶6. In 2005, Austria amended its immigration laws to include more restrictive legal tools against foreign visa holders who are suspected of terrorist links, of extremist preaching or incitement, or against individuals sympathizing with terrorist acts. However, Austria remains an entry point for illegal immigration from the Balkans.

¶7. A legislative package introduced in July 2005 earmarked 105 million Euro for terrorism prevention measures and related research through the year 2013; 5 million euros have been earmarked for the year 2005; 12 million euros for 2006.

¶8. In 2005, Austria began an investigation into potential terrorist recruitment in prisons and refugee camps. This became a concern following a surge of Chechen asylum seekers entering Austria in 2004.

Terrorist Groups

¶9. The BVT singles out a handful of suspected extremist mosques in Vienna for increased monitoring. It continues surveillance of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad movement and of suspected Afghan extremists entering Austria as asylum seekers.

¶10. According to the BVT, there are a few immigrant Muslims who sympathize with groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwan al Muslimin), the Al-Gama'a al-islamiya, and the "Global Revolution" group (Hizb ut-tahrir al-islamiyya). The BVT believes there are also some who supporter the "Active Islamic Youth" group (Aktiva Islamska Omladina). Some Turks in Austria support the Turkish jihadist Metin Kaplan, the "Caliph of Cologne." There are also some sympathizers of the Iranian People's Modjahedin (Modjahedin-e-Khalq). Among Palestinians in Austria, there are supporters of Hamas, as well as of the "Salafiyya Jihadiyya."

Cooperation with the U.S.

¶11. In 2005, Austria continued its participation in multilateral peacekeeping missions. It maintained its operational cooperation with U.S. law enforcement and counterterrorism authorities. The visit of Austrian Interior Minister Prokop to the U.S. in October 2005 solidified this relationship. Prokop met with National Intelligence Director John Negroponte, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, CIA Director Porter Goss and

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FBI Director Robert Mueller. Among other topics, the parties discussed the danger of recruitment of terrorists on European soil, as well as ways to intensify exchange of fingerprint and DNA data. Austrian and U.S. authorities maintain an exchange of know-how on the use of air marshals.

¶12. During 2005, Austria maintained four police instructors at the Iraqi Police Academy in Jordan to help train Iraqi police. In Afghanistan, Austria temporarily deployed 93 soldiers to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to help provide security for the September 2005 elections. Additionally, Austria committed 4 liaison officers to the ISAF headquarters in Kabul and two advisors to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

¶13. Austria in 2005 began working toward establishment of a "security cordon" with countries bordering the EU through individual "security partnerships," with a focus on countries of the southeastern Mediterranean.

¶14. Austria, together with the U.S. and the EU, operates

two anti-terrorism-related training programs for countries in Central Asia: the Central Asian Border Initiative (CABSI) and the Vienna Central Asia Initiative (VICA).

¶15. Within the UN program against terrorism, Austria has pledged a total of USD 1 million for the period 2002-2006. It is a "major donor country" to the UN's Vienna-based anti-terrorism and anti-drug office, the United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP).

¶16. Austrian authorities continued to be responsive to U.S. requests for protection of U.S. facilities in the country. The Regional Security Office (RSO) has strengthened its working relationship with Austrian police intelligence units concerning potential terrorist threats against USG personnel and facilities in Austria. RSO has received significantly increased Austrian police protection for Tri-Mission facilities after the September 11 attacks. In addition, RSO has a functional liaison with the Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defensive Unit of the Austrian Army for timely support in the event of a nuclear, chemical or biological attack on Embassy facilities. Austrian authorities routinely lend positive and quick security support in connection with anti-U.S. demonstrations near the embassy. Austrian security assistance in connection with protests against the U.S. policies has been entirely satisfactory.

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